

# **Exploring the constructions of a masculine identity amongst adolescent boys in the Western Cape**

by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Violence in South Africa is a serious problem and young men have been and still are the driving force behind the high levels of violence in South Africa. Although young men commit the most violence researchers have largely neglected the critical examination of young men and their association with violence. This study set out to examine this phenomenon by conducting focus group and group interviews with 23 adolescent boys between the ages of 14-16. The boys were selected from two schools in the Cape region. Two focus groups and one group interview was conducted in order to gain insight from the participants on what they thought were the motivations for young mens' tendencies to enact violence. As a result, various themes emerged from the participants responses. The participants provided rich descriptions about what they thought motivated men to enact violence. Overwhelmingly all the themes highlighted that men and boys who endorse traditional dominant ideals of masculinity that encourage toughness, dominance and willingness to resort to violence were more likely to enact violence. However, what was apparent was that for most boys violence played an integral part in the construction of their masculinity. It was defining characteristic of what it meant to be a man.

## OPSOMMING

Geweld in Suid-Afrika is 'n ernstige probleem en jong mans was en is nog steeds die dryfkrag agter die hoë vlakke van geweld in Suid-Afrika. Ten spyte van jong mans se beeld as oortreders van geweld is jong mans se geweld deur navorsers geïgnoreer. Hierdie studie het 'n ondersoek gedoen om uit te vind wat die motivering is wat sommige jong mans na geweld toe dryf. As gevolg, het hierdie studie 23 adolessente jong mans tussen die ouderdom van 14 tot 16 'n onderhoud met hulle waargeneem. Die seuns is gekies uit twee skole in die Kaapse streek. Twee fokusgroepe en een groep onderhoud is uitgevoer met die adolessente seuns om 'n begrip te kry van hierdie fenomeen. Verskeie temas is uit die deelnemers antwoorde geneem. In al die temas kon ek aflei dat mans en seuns wat die tradisionele dominerende ideale van manlikheid omhels is meer geneig om geweld uitgevoer. Wat egter duidelik is vir die meeste seuns is dat geweld 'n integrale deel is in die konstruksie van hul manlikheid. Dit is 'n kenmerk van wat dit beteken om 'n man te wees.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1. Introduction

South Africa is considered to be one of the most violent nations in the world (Lockhat & Van Niekerk, 2000). Since the country's first democratic election in 1994, daily levels of violence are thought to have increased (Seeking & Thaler, 2010). Researchers have argued that the high levels of violence in South Africa are due to the violent legacy of apartheid. Apartheid has bestowed on South Africa a culture of violence (Wright, 2007). This understanding stems from the idea that violence is a normal part of South African civilisation (Simpson, 1993). At present, South Africa has one of the highest homicide rates in the world (Seeking & Thaler, 2010).

The high levels of violence are worrying for many South Africans. Violence is a key contributor to the high mortality and morbidity rates in the country (Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla & Ratele, 2009). Interpersonal violence is responsible for nearly half of South Africa's injury related deaths making violence one of the leading causes of death in South Africa (Seedat, et al., 2009). The violent death rates of South Africans are among the highest in the world. South Africa's violent death rate for men is a staggering 113 per 100 000 people. This figure is eight times higher than the global average of 8.2 per 100 000 (Abrahams, Jewkes, Martin, Mathews, Lombard & Vetten, 2009). Although violence related deaths rates for women are not as high in comparison to those of men, they are nonetheless high. In 1999 the homicide rates of females at 24 per 100 000 people was six times higher than the global average of 4.2 per 100 000 (Bradshaw, Bourne, & Nannan, 2003). Recent estimates indicate that the number of female homicides has since declined. In 2009 about 930 female homicides were reported. This amounted to an overall female homicide average of 12.9 per 100 000 people (Abrahams, 2009). Although the number of female homicides has dropped, South

Africa's homicide rates for females are still extremely high. While violence is responsible for an alarmingly amount of deaths, more people are left injured through acts of violence. Each year about 1.75 million people seek medical care for injuries sustained through violence (Jewkes, Abrahams, Mathew, Seedat, Van Niekerk, Suffla, & Ratele, 2009).

Violence also has many indirect consequences. Broadly speaking, women who are victims of intimate partner violence are more likely to have problems with their physical, mental, and reproductive health. These women are also at risk being of victims to homicide and are more likely to commit suicide (Rutherford, Zwi, Grove & Butchart, 2007). Furthermore, women who have been raped are at risk of unwanted pregnancy, HIV, and other sexually transmitted infections (Rutherford et al., 2007). The physical and psychosocial impact of violence changes the lives of the victims and perpetrators and influences the lives of their families, peers, and community groups. Violence also places financial and social burdens on society (Haegerich & Hall, 2011). In many countries the direct economic costs of violence includes medical, policing, and legal costs. The indirect cost of violence includes the loss of earnings, productivity, of investments in human capital, increases life insurance costs and reduces quality of life (Rutherford et al., 2007).

The effects of violence are felt by everyone, but none more so than young men. An overarching feature of violence in South Africa is the disproportionate role that young men play in the enactment of violence (Seedat et al., 2009). Young men are responsible for committing the majority of violent acts while simultaneously being the most likely victims (Seedat et al., 2009). Findings from a national crime victimisation survey conducted in all nine South African provinces in 2007 showed that young males aged 16-24 are most vulnerable to being a victim of a violent crime such as assault (Pharaoh, 2009). Furthermore,

estimates reveal that young men between the ages 15-29 are most at risk of being victims of homicide (Norman, Matzopoulos, Groenewald, & Bradshaw, 2007).

Women also bear the brunt of male violence. Young men are responsible for the majority of violence inflicted on women. Each year about 55 000 rapes of women and girls are reported to the South African Police Services (Seedat et al., 2009). Although the rape statistics are extremely high they are not accurate. The actual amount of women raped each year is believed to be nine times higher than actually reported (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). There are several barriers that affect the reporting of rape in South Africa. According to Jewkes and Abrahams (2002) rapes are often underreported because of fears that the perpetrator might retaliate or that the rape survivor might not be believed. The reporting of rape is also hindered by the difficulties some rape survivors have in obtaining physical access to the police. Furthermore, many rape survivors also report police insensitivity as another obstacle to the reporting rape (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002).

The enactment of violence is a gendered phenomenon, and while young men are mainly responsible for the majority violence in South Africa, men committing violence is not a new phenomenon. South Africa's history paints a vivid picture of the close association between men and violence (Luyt, 2005). Despite the connection, the critical examination of men in the study of violence has largely been taken for granted (Luyt, 2005). The reason for this is mainly because masculinity had been and in most cases still is seen in essentialist terms (Jeftha, 2009).

Essentialism implies that human beings are biologically predisposed to certain behaviours (Irvine, 1990). In the specific case of masculinity, essentialism proposes that men and boys have a set of prescribed mannerisms, behaviours, and roles that are embedded in the

genetic makeup of every male (Lorber, 1994). Essentialism also infers that these characteristics differ from what it means to be a woman, which causes the qualities assigned to the two gender to be polarised as if mutually exclusive (Lynch, 2008).

One behaviour that is often associated with masculinity is violence. An argument that is commonly put forward by essentialists is that men are a more violent because they possess more testosterone (de Muase, 2008). This reasoning has proven to be inconsistent as research has shown no association between testosterone levels and aggression in teenage boys (de Muase, 2008).

Essentialist ideologies about masculinity reduce the cause of violence to biological tendency of all males. Men and boys are therefore considered victims of their biology and thus incapable of controlling their actions. In the past, essentialist ideologies about masculinity were quite pervasive. As a result, the majority of men and women regarded masculinity and femininity as fixed constructs. Due to this fact research on masculinity was rarely conducted.

Research on masculinity was first initiated once feminists began to theorise gender (Jeftha, 2006). These days it is widely acknowledged among academics that masculinity and femininity are constructed realities (Jeftha, 2006). From a social constructionist perspective, men and boys adopt their gender roles and behaviours from their culture. The enactment of violent behaviour by young men can in part be explained by their cultural understandings of masculinity and the related gender norms and roles corresponding to these concepts (Haegerich & Hall, 2011).

Over the years several studies that have examined the construction of masculinity have indicated that men and boys who endorse the traditional understandings of masculinity were more accepting of violence (Reilly, Muldoom & Byrne, 2004; Fouten, 2006; Jeftha, 2006;

Barker & Loewenstein, 2007 & Smith, 2008). Traits such as toughness, dominance, and willingness to resort to violence to resolve interpersonal conflict, defence and honour were considered key characteristics of the masculine identity (Haegerich & Hall 2011).

Various studies conducted on the enactment of violence by men and boys have provided useful insight into understandings of male violence. The critical examination of male violence is still largely neglected in South Africa (Luyt, 2005). Furthermore Shefer, Buikema, Ratele, Shabalala, and Strebel (2007) also claim that there is a dearth of research that has examined the constructions of masculinity in South Africa. As a result, this study seeks to fill the void by conducting focus group discussions with adolescent boys between the ages of 14-16. Primarily, the aim is to explore the motivations behind why young men enact violence. The aim of this study is also to gain insight into the role violence plays in the construction of masculinity.

## **1.1 Research outline**

This report has been divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the literature in the field of masculinity focusing specifically on the broader constructions of masculinity, the cultural definitions of masculinity most commonly associated with violence, and also how masculinity is constructed in South Africa.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology employed in the study. It provides a detailed description of the research design used as well as the data collection procedures that were employed. Furthermore this chapter also provides a detailed analysis on the methods used to analyse all the data collected. Lastly this chapter highlights the ethical practices that were taken into account and ends with a self-reflective section from the researcher.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the discussions and the findings of the study. It highlights the key themes that emerged in data analysis and interprets these themes using social constructionism as a theoretical framework.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the study and discusses the limitations of its findings for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2. Introduction**

Young men have been, and still are, responsible for the high levels of violence in South Africa (Seedat et al., 2009). While this is evidently true, mainstream academia has largely neglected the fact that men commit the majority of violence in South Africa (Luyt, 2005). According to Jeftha (2006) the socially constructed nature of masculinity is a key variable for understanding men's violence. In order to understand what motivates men to enact violence we first need to understand the broader constructions of masculinity. This review therefore starts with an overview of the theoretical framework that this study will employ, namely social constructionism. Thereafter it will proceed to discuss the broader constructions of masculinity. This review of the literature will also focus on research that has been conducted on young men's violence and will provide an overview of masculinity in South Africa.

### **2.1 Definitions of core constructs**

#### **2.1.1 Violence**

Violence is considered an act of aggression on an individual using brute force, ferocity, and savagery with the intention solely to injure and cause destruction (Wehemeier, McIntosh, Turnbull & Asburner, 2006).

### **2.1.2 Enactment**

Enactment is described as an act or to perform. For example, enactment will be defined as the act or performance of violent and aggressive behaviour (Wehemeier et al., 2006).

### **2.1.3 Motivation**

Motivation is defined as the reason for committing a certain act (Wehemeier et al., 2006). For the purpose of this study motivation will be defined as the reason behind why men behave violently.

### **2.1.4 Masculinity**

Defining masculinity is challenging, as more than one definition of masculinity exists. There are essentialist definitions of masculinity that propose that men and boys have a set of prescribed mannerisms, behaviors, and roles that are embedded in the genetic makeup of every man (Lorber, 1994). There are also social constructionist definitions of masculinity that define masculinity as an outline of gender practices generated in particular situation in a changing structure of relationships (Morrell, 1998). For the purpose of this research a social constructionist definition has been employed.

## **2.2 Social constructionism**

For the purpose of this research a social constructionist framework is used. Social constructionism examines the way knowledge of the world is understood and practiced. It explains the processes, by which people come to describe, explain and otherwise account for the world in which they live (Gergen, 1985).



Social constructionism is skeptical of conventional means of knowledge that people take for granted in daily life. It requires that we give up on beliefs, commonly accepted categories or understandings of the world often brought forward to us in a straight forward impartial manner (Stride, 2008). Social constructionism also encourages us to challenge the objective basis of conventional knowledge (Stride, 2008). Instead social constructionism claims that members of a culture construct beliefs, values, institutions, customs, and laws that make up their social reality as they interact with another.

People construct knowledge and understandings of the world through their everyday interactions with each other. Social interaction plays a vital role for social constructionist in the creation of knowledge.

Language as a form of social action (Burr, 1995) provides the basis on which human beings make sense of the world (Delemater & Hyde, 1998). It provides the means by which human beings interpret new experiences. It also provides human beings with the classifications and characteristics that they use to classify and order people and events (Delemater & Hyde, 1998).

The reality of everyday life is shared through people's interaction with each other. As a result, knowledge is dependent on one another. Through these interactions knowledge of the world is constructed and in turn these constructions inform how human beings act in the world (Stride, 2008). According to Delemater and Hyde (1998) shared typifications of everyday reality become institutionalized which leads to habituation.

### **2.3 Social construction of masculinity**

Social constructionism refutes essentialist ideologies that regard masculinity as a fixed set of roles and behaviours that all men are biologically predisposed to. Instead social constructionist claims that the different gender roles and behaviours enacted by men and

women are adopted from their cultural ideas of masculinity and femininity (Pleck, Sonestien & Ku, 1994). Masculinity and femininity are thus not two mutually exclusive realities but cultural stereotypes of what men and women are supposed to be like. Men, women, boys and girls all enact these stereotypes daily in their social interactions with each other. Through these interactions they constantly create and recreate their gendered realities (Lorber, 1994).

By constantly reproducing these cultural stereotypes, the idea of what it means to be a man or woman becomes shared typifications. These typifications become institutionalised and a routine part of people's everyday lives. People start to take these realities for granted and begin to regard gender as fixed when in fact gender is a performance, a demonstration that one does repeatedly (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

On a practical level, a social constructionist framework is important for understanding the motives behind young men's tendencies to enact violence, because unlike essentialism it does not reduce male violence to a set of biological traits. Violence is therefore not a fixed attribute that all men possess. Instead social constructionist claims that masculinity is a set of gender practices that men adopt from the cultural understandings of masculinity. A social constructionist paradigm therefore allows us to examine the potential role of masculine ideology i.e. the beliefs about what men are like and how they should act. Examining what men are like and how they should act give us insight into the role violence plays in the construction of masculinity for many men.

In addition, a social constructionist perspective also argues that masculinity is fluid and dynamic. They argue that multiple forms of masculinity coexist with each other (Smith, 2008). These masculinities are not equal; they do not possess the same level of masculine traits. As a result, the key differences in gender roles between men and women and men and other men are considered a key variable for understanding violence (Kreinert, 2003). In order

to understand the socially constructed nature of masculinity we first need to understand the broader constructions of masculinity. A more detailed insight to the socially constructed nature of masculinity is provided below.

### **2.3.1 Multiple Masculinities**

Researchers such as Connell (2005) have claimed that no one type of masculinity can be found everywhere. Connell (2005), who adopts a social constructionist perspective when examining masculinity, claims that because different cultures construct masculinity differently, it is inappropriate to speak of masculinity as though it is a single and tangible entity that all men possess. Instead masculinity is a broad construction achieved in a particular social context, historical moment, or socio cultural context (Morrell, 2001). It is therefore more appropriate that we speak of masculinities instead of masculinity.

Race and class are significant contributors of the form a masculine identity might take (Morrell, 2001). In any society, multiple masculinities co-exist each with individual's characteristics, shapes, and features. It should be noted however, that these masculinities are unequal as social forces (Jeftha, 2006). The degree of power that men hold differs in terms of class, nation, race, and sexual preference (Morrell, 1998). This means that within multiple masculinities certain traits and types of men are privileged and dominant over other men.

### **2.3.2 Hegemonic masculinity**

Since masculinities are not equal they relate to each other in an order of ascendancy where they continually compete for power and legitimacy. At the top of this hierarchy is hegemonic masculinity.

The term hegemony was introduced by Antonio Gramsci's in his investigation of class relations. Hegemony is a cultural dynamic in which a specific group creates and upholds a position of power and leadership in all domains of social life (Smith, 2008). Generally the ruling group defines, legitimises, and frames the way events are understood in all domains of social life. They do this in order to preserve and benefit from their dominant stance (Fouten, 2006). Although the ruling group's dominance pervades all domains of social and public life, it does not mean that other discourses do not exist. Other discourses do exist but are subordinated to this dominant conceptualisation (Wetherall & Edley, 1999). For the most part dominance of the ruling group is often regarded as normal when in truth it is not. Subsequently it is rarely ever challenged.

Gramsci's idea of hegemony was later refined and applied to the construct of masculinity by Robert Connell (Fouten, 2006). Hegemonic masculinity is a way of being masculine which is primarily concerned with the subordination of women and the domination of alternative forms of masculinity (Wetherall & Edley, 1999). Connell (2005) defines hegemonic masculinity as the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 2005).

Hegemonic masculinity defines what the ideal man is supposed to be like and also defines how the ideal men ought to behave or act (Fouten, 2006, Jeftha, 2006 & Smith, 2008). Hegemonic masculinity is an idealised version of masculinity. The concept of hegemonic masculinity provides a way of explaining that although a number of masculinities coexist, a particular version of masculinity holds sway, giving power, and privilege on men who support it and claim it as their own (Connell, 2005).

It should be noted that internationally hegemonic masculinity has been that of the white heterosexual male. While this is still considered true for countries such as the United States of America and many European countries, in South Africa the situation is different. Since South Africa's political transition, defining one type of masculinity as hegemonic is challenging as many dominant types of masculinity co-exist (Jeftha, 2006).

Hegemonic masculinities are intricately linked to power. This power translates to socialised differences between men and women and also different types of men. These men may adhere to different understandings of masculinity or to similar masculinities to varying degrees (Omar, 2011). The aim of hegemonic masculinities is to sustain their power both in relation to women and subordinate masculinities (Luyt, 2005).

### **2.3.3 Traditional masculinity**

Hegemonic masculinity has always been equated with the traditional patriarchal norms of masculinity. Brannon and Davids (1976) outline four norms that have been relatively universal in defining what it means to be a man.

1. The first and most salient of norms, known as no "Sissy stuff" prescribes that men avoid behaviours that are regarded as feminine. It is generally expected of women to express their emotions, express humility, and be good listeners. In contrast, men are expected to think rationally, be good talkers, and display high levels of confidence and assertiveness (Smith, 2008).
2. The second norm "The big wheel" implies that men are expected to be successful and to be respected for their success (Lynch, 2008).

3. The third dimension is that of the “Sturdy oak.” According to this norm, men are expected to be tough and self-reliant (Lynch, 2008).
4. The last norm known as “Give em hell”, prescribes that it is acceptable and expected of men to use aggression and violence.

While these days we are confronted with different images of men on a daily basis, generally speaking what it means to be a man is still strongly associated with traditional norms of masculinity (Jeftha, 2006). There is still no room for “sissies.” Men are expected to rule their households and provide for their families. Women are expected to stay at home and take care of the children and run the day to day organisation of the household (Jeftha, 2006).

## **2.4 The motivation for the enactment among young men.**

Men’s violence is a well-researched phenomenon. Several studies that have examined the construction of masculinity have found that young men who endorse the traditional patriarchal ideals of masculinity encourage, domination, control, toughness, status, independence, and power. These are the cultural ideals most commonly linked to the violent behaviour enacted by young men (Barker & Lowenstein, 1997; Totten, 2003; Fouten, 2006; Jeftha, 2006; Smith 2008). In most cases, aggression is used to demonstrate the possession of these masculine characteristics (Haegerich, 2011).

### **2.4.1 Violence against women**

Gender based violence i.e. violence against women is perhaps one of the most researched areas within the field of masculinity. Several studies conducted internationally and nationally have revealed that men who subscribe to the dominant patriarchal views of

masculinity that are infused within the ideals of male power and supremacy and are more likely to enact violence against women (Barker & Lowenstein, 1997; Totten, 2003 & Fouten, 2006). Violence is often used as a demonstration of male power compared to the lesser power of women (Jewkes, 2002).

Research conducted by Barker and Loewenstein (1997) with 127 low income Brazilian young men and women from Rio de Janeiro revealed that some of the young men who held traditional familial patriarchal beliefs of masculinity were more likely to justify the use of violence against women. For many of these young men, men are the rulers of their household and therefore had the authority to use violence against their partners. In Barker and Lowenstein's (1997) study, most of the young men's justification for inflicting violence on women revolved around financial organisation of the household. If the man paid the rent or provided for the household, he was allowed to expect certain things from the woman in return: for example, fidelity, taking care of the children, and keeping the house in order. If the woman did not comply with her obligations, the man was perceived to have the right to use violence against her.

In a study conducted by Fouten (2006) on the regulatory conceptions of masculinity in Cape Town, South Africa, Fouten revealed that some of the adolescent boys in his study regarded women as subordinate to men. These participants were also more likely to justify the use of violence against women. In his study some of the participants revealed that men who are figures of authority and whom are responsible for their partners, had the right to use violence against his partner as a means of asserting his authority.

Similarly in Totten's (2003) study on girlfriend abuse as a construction of masculinity conducted in Canada, Totten reported that the majority of the 30 adolescent boys he interviewed had inflicted some form of violence on their girlfriends. Interestingly enough

almost all boys in his study were socialized into the patriarchal masculine role of dominance, aggression, and power.

Patriarchal societies are largely based on a gender hierarchy in which men are regarded as superior to women (Kaufmann, 1999). In most cases, violence or the threat of violence is used to establish a pecking order between men and women. In patriarchal societies violence or the threat of violence confers unto men a continued set of privileges and forms of power. Violence is therefore both a result and a means to an end for men (Kaufmann, 1999)

Kaufmann (1999) also argues that violence against women is not only a result of men's desire to maintain power but also out of his sense of entitlement to a set of privileges. For example, in the case of the Barker and Lowenstein study (1997) it can be argued that the reasons men justified violence against women can be attributed to their sense of entitlement to certain privileges like fidelity, taking care of the children, and keeping the house in order.

#### **2.4.2 Male on Male violence**

According to Kaufmann (1999) men's violence against women does not occur in isolation but is associated to men's violence against other men. Patriarchal societies are therefore not just based on a hierarchy of men over women but men over other men. Relationships of dominance and subordination between men are therefore often displayed through physical violence. The enactment of violence is often a way of gaining and maintaining status, reputation, and resources in the male group (Seedat et al., 2009). The enactment of violence is also used to sustain a sense of masculine identity (Reilly, Muldroom & Byrne, 2004). Research conducted by Reilly, Muldroom and Byrne (2004) on young men as victims and perpetrators of violence in Northern Ireland found that violence was an integral part in the construction of masculine identity for young men. In many of the participants' narratives the enactment of violent behaviour often centred on attaining masculine status.



## 2.5 South African masculinities

In order to understand masculinity in South Africa one needs to look at the country's past (Fouten, 2006). Historically, specific creations of masculinity in South Africa have been linked with inequalities and discrimination. The history of white rule in South Africa suggests that in the past the white ruling class masculinity was hegemonic (Morrell, 1998). This domination, it can be argued, was reflected in Afrikaans speaking white men who displayed an authoritative, punitive and merciless form of masculinity (Morrell, 2001).

An established hierarchy existed between white males and men of colour. This structure infiltrated all parts of social life but was especially prevalent in the work place. Although employment levels were high for both white and black individuals, working conditions and remuneration were vastly different. White men remained in managerial positions and continued to communicate to black employees from a *baaskaap* (master or boss) position. Black labourers were often referred to as “boy” in South African English. The use of the term “boy” to refer to African men is one which captured a condensation, a refusal to recognize the possibility of growth and the achievement of manhood amongst African men (Smith, 2008).

The military was one such institute that clearly reflected dominant beliefs and policies of a regime of power among ethnic groups (Mankayi, 2010). High ranking positions in the military were only afforded to white men (Mankayi, 2010). Coloured and Indian men were recruited and primarily confined to supplementary duties but were given weapons training in case of war. Black men were recruited for armed guard duty at the military stations or trained as drivers, clerks, store men, and dog handlers (Mankayi, 2010).

However, as much as black men were considered powerless during Apartheid, black men often took on dominant roles within their homes and their communities (Morrell, 1998). The violence displayed in their households could be seen as a means in which black men were

able to affirm their sense of manhood as well as take revenge and act against the inequalities they experience outside of their home (Smith, 2008).

In the new South Africa, traditional versions of maleness and male sexuality have changed (Reid & Walker, 2005). Discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, race, class, age, and creed is illegal (Morrell, 2002). The new policies have not overthrown men from their domination in public life, politics, and earnings but there nevertheless have been gender shifts (Morrell, 2002).

In the new South Africa, the ideal man is one who is non-violent, a good father and husband, is employed, and is able to provide for his family (Reid & Walker, 2005). This discourse of masculinity is what is known as the “heroic masculinity” as epitomised by Nelson Mandela (Smith, 2008). What has also emerged strongly in the new South Africa is a more violent form of masculinity. This is illustrated by the high incidence of rape and violent crime in South Africa. According to Reid and Walker (2005) it is not surprising that the liberalisation of sexuality appears to have been accompanied by an increase in gender violence. Violent men of the past, if anything, have become more violent in the present. Morell (2001) argues that these displays of violence can be understood as a social attempt by men to deal with the loss of power in society.

Xaba (2001) highlights two types of masculinity that became dominant before and after South Africa’s political transition. The first, known as struggle masculinity, refers to young impoverished black men that were associated with the anti-apartheid struggle. These men were revered for their violence and the leadership and were desired by women for their leadership. Many men who endorsed this form of masculinity often had multiple female partners. Struggle masculinity considered women fair game, and rape was a way of disciplining women. These days the struggle masculinity is not considered acceptable in

South Africa. Men who continue to embrace this form of masculinity often find themselves on the wrong side of the law for the same reasons they were considered heroes in the past.

In contrast, post-struggle masculinity is characterised by respect for law and order, the restoration of public order, the resumption of paying for services, respect for state institutions, co-operation with police, and fighting crime (Xaba, 2001).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a review of the literature on the constructions of masculinities. It began by providing an overview of the framework employed namely social construction. Thereafter it placed emphasis on the broader construction of masculinity so that insight could be provided on the power differentials that come into play between men and women and men and men. It also proceeded to focus on research studies that have examined enactment of violence among men so that insight into why men enact violence against women and men can be provided. Lastly, this review provided an overview of masculinity in South Africa.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Due to the nature of the study a qualitative paradigm was employed so that a detailed understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour could be provided. This chapter therefore presents an overview of the research methodology, design, and procedure. It explains how participants were recruited and how data was collected and analysed. It also describes the ethical procedures that were employed throughout the research process and provided a reflexive analysis about the research process.

### **3.2 Methodology**

The proposed research is a qualitative study aimed at examining the motivation for the enactment of violence among adolescent males in the Western Cape. According to Babbie Mouton, Payze, Vorster, Boshoff, and Prozesky (2001), qualitative research aims to study the individual's behaviour from the participant's viewpoint. Qualitative research is therefore very useful in gathering culture specific information about people.

Qualitative research involves data collection techniques such as direct observation, in depth interviews, focus groups, diary methods, role play and simulation and case studies. An advantage of qualitative research is that it allows the researcher to ask open ended questions. Open ended questions provide participants with the freedom to respond in their own words (Mack, Woodson, Maqueen, Guest, & Namey 2005). It induces responses that are significant, culturally salient, rich, explanatory, and unforeseen by the researcher (Mack et al., 2005). Furthermore by applying qualitative methods, the relationship between the researcher and the participant is often less formal than in quantitative research. In qualitative research participants have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater depth than is

typically the case with quantitative methods. It is against this background that a qualitative paradigm was employed for this study.

In a qualitative study the participants are able provide an in depth detailed understanding on the motivations for enactment of violence among men that otherwise could not be provided by a quantitative analysis. Furthermore a qualitative paradigm also allows me the freedom to ask open ended questions this I feel is important, as it encourages the participants to engage openly in discussion with each other expressing their own views and opinions.

### **3.3 Participants**

A purposive sampling method was used to select the participants for this study. Purposive sampling is used when a specific or decisive factor must be met by the participants (Coyne, 1996). In purposeful sampling the participants are selected according to the needs of the study (Morse, 1991). Purposive sampling strategies are designed to enhance understandings of groups' experiences or for developing theories and concepts (Devers & Frankel, 2000). The inclusion criterion for this study was that boys had to be between the ages of 14-16 whom attended either one of the two schools used in the study.

It is reasonable to expect that adolescent boys between the ages of 14-16 are able to give a clear description of what the motivation for the enactment of violence is among young men. Adolescence is a difficult and challenging life stage (Gentry & Campbell, 2002). It is best defined as the transitional period between childhood and adulthood. Adolescence is phase where the adolescent is in search of an identity that would take them into adulthood (Erikson, 1963). In the specific case of adolescence for boys, adolescence is the time in which they search for identity that would make them men. As a result, they tend to engage in various behaviours they deem to be masculine. Some behaviours do not pose a health threat, but some

of the behaviours are often risky and dangerous. Since adolescence is regarded as the period in which the adolescent searches for an adult identity, this study has chosen adolescent boys between the ages 14-16 to provide insight on what motivates adolescent males to behave violently towards others. In total, 23 adolescent boys between the ages of 14-16 participated in the study. Approximately 20 of the boys are racially classified as coloured males in South Africa and three of the participants were historically black. The socio-economic background of the participants differed. All of the participants in the study came from lower middle class or lower income communities in the Cape region. Furthermore, the schools that they attended were lower income schools. It should be noted that the term “coloured” refers to an ethnic group of people in South Africa that is from mixed descent (Posel, 2001).

### **3.4 Data collection and procedure**

Participants were drawn from two schools in the Western Cape, a secondary school and a skills school. Skills schools are for children with learning impediments. The aim of a skills school is to teach the learners a practical skill set that they can use once they are done with school. Permission was therefore requested from the Western Cape Education Department to approach schools in the Western Cape. After receiving permission from the Western Cape Education Department, meetings with the principals of the respective schools were set up to determine if they were interested in participating in the study. Once the principals' consent was received, I was allowed to work closely with both schools' life orientation teachers. At one school the principal allowed me to speak to the grade nine and ten classrooms. I approached the respective classrooms and told the learners that I would be conducting a study at their school on what it means to be a man. I was careful not to disclose too much information about the study due to the nature of the study and the stigma that could possibly be associated with the study. Possible stigmas that could be associated with the boys

interested in the study are that they are violent. So in order to prevent any stigma the full nature of the study was discussed with the boys who showed a real interest in the study. As soon as some boys showed interest, I took them out of the classroom to explain the full nature of my study in detail. I handed each potential participant a consent form to give to their parents (see appendix C). The consent form explained the nature of the research and provided my contact details, should the parents wish to contact me directly.

The recruitment procedure employed at the school of skills was different. Instead of going to respective classes, the life orientation teacher called for all the boys from level one to level three classrooms to report to a specific classroom. Once the boys were in the classroom I explained the nature of the study to all the boys. The boys who expressed interest in the study received consent forms that they had to give to their parents. It should be noted that the school of skills worked on a different system as opposed to normal schools. One of the most noticeable differences between the two schools is that the classrooms were divided into levels as opposed to grades. Boys who were in level one classrooms were usually the younger boys of the school aged 13-14. Level one represented the first year of schooling at the school of the school.

Once the consent forms had been returned I arranged the times, venues, and dates with the life orientation teachers of the respective schools. In total, I conducted two focus group discussions and one group interview. Focus groups are defined as a group discussion that explores a specific topic. The process of a focus group involves some kind of collective activity (Kitzinger & Barbaour, 1999). A group interview has a similar structure to a focus group discussion, however; the group consist of fewer people. The two focus groups were conducted at the secondary school and the group interview at the school of skills. Initially, my plan was to conduct three focus groups, however, due to absenteeism of some of the participants I opted to conduct a group interview at the skills school as an alternative method.

Furthermore throughout the data collection process I had an assistant who was tasked with taking notes, making observations and who was allowed to ask questions that were of interest to him within the scope of the research topic. It should be noted, that before each focus group the participants were given an assent form to complete (see appendix B).

Focus group and groups interviews were employed because they allowed me the freedom to ask open ended questions that otherwise would not be applicable in a one on one interview. Open ended questions encourage the participants to engage in discussion with one another. It provided room for the participants to ask each other questions and for them to engage in debates about issues that were of interest to them. Due to the informal nature of focus groups and group interviews, I felt the focus group discussion would minimise the power dynamic between me and the participants. Furthermore, focus groups and group interviews were also selected because it is helpful in examining not only what people think but also how and why they think the way they do. Lastly, focus groups were used because they allowed me to collect data from a number of participants in one session thus avoiding the time consuming process of individual interviews.

At the beginning of each focus group, the boys were shown a clip from the 1993 movie *Menace to Society*. The scene in the movie is based on two men who engage in a fight as a result of women. In this film man A approaches man B in a very hostile manner about an issue man B has with man A's female cousin. In the storyline man B allegedly got man A's cousin pregnant and as result, wants nothing to do with her. Man A confronts man B in honour of his cousin the two men engage in a fight in which man B beats up man A before the fight is stopped by the grandfather of man B.

The video clip served numerous purposes. Firstly, it served as a vignette to generate discussion, and as an ice breaker to make the participants feel at ease. However, and more



importantly, the video clip was shown because it intended to portray a certain kind of masculinity.

The focus group discussions consisted of nine participants in the first focus group, and eleven participants in the second focus group. The consensus in the literature is that 8-12 participants are a suitable number for a focus group (Sim & Snell, 1996). This is the recommended number to ensure that some members do not go silent and small enough to manage and provide an opportunity to participate (Morgan, 1996). The other means of data collection was a group interview which consisted of three members. Initially, the aim was to conduct a focus group of between four and six participants. However, due to the absenteeism, lack of response to follow-ups, and potential participants not returning the consent forms signed by their parents, I was unable to conduct a focus group discussion.

Each focus group discussion was video recorded with the permission of the participants and audio taped as a backup measure. Video recordings are important because they show how people say things rather than just what is said. Cameras can also be useless at times as it tends to focus on the speaker and pays less attention to the other participants in the focus group. In this study the video camera was placed in a position that included every participant who participated in the focus group discussion. Cameras can make participants uneasy or shy to speak in front of the camera. This was not the case in the study as the majority of the boys seemed really optimistic about the idea of being video recorded. Furthermore, the positioning of the camera ensured that the focus groups discussion proceeded effortlessly. Each focus group was between an hour and thirty minutes to two hours long without any breaks.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

Data from video and audio tapes was transcribed and thematic analysis within a social constructionist framework was used to analysis the data. Thematic analysis, working within a

social constructionist framework is interested in understanding the role of the social context in influencing the particular individual accounts in the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). This paradigm highlights the position of language as an object, it focuses on the widespread social meaning, and how it is encoded in language (Smith, 2008). In relation to the topic of masculinity, one could argue that society provides particular discourses of masculinity that influence how adolescent boys understand this concept and how they act in relation to it. I was therefore guided to look beyond subjective experiences of the participants to examine the particular social discourses and arrangements that influence their realities.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theoretical thematic approach called inductive analysis was used for developing themes. Inductive analysis includes emergent themes that are newly generated during the course of data collection (Braun & Clark, 2006).

The analysis for this research was based on the step by step framework of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006).

1. Due to the data being video recorded and audio recoded the data had to be transcribed into written form. Once the transcribing was done I had to immerse myself in the data. This required reading and rereading of the transcribed data verbatim in the search for meaning. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) it is imperative that the researcher read through the data at least once before they can start with the initial coding.
2. Initial codes were put in place, thereafter I began searching for emerging themes. Particular themes were developed and the amount of themes was guided by me in order to keep the research focused and manageable.
3. Once the themes had been developed. I had to revisit the developed themes to ensure that a more focused and elaborate analysis of the data was achieved.

4. The next step was to make sense of the particular themes. At this point, I defined and refined my themes presented in my analysis. This means that I defined the essence of each theme. I focused on what each theme was about and determined what aspect of the data each theme captures. For each theme, I wrote a detailed analysis and identified the story each theme tells.
5. Once my interpretation of the data was complete I proceeded to construct a report that detailed my findings.

### **3.6 Reflexivity**

Reflexive researchers are continually aware of the potential impact their values and life experiences can have on the research process. I was thus aware of the impact my race, age, socio economic status, and gender had on the research. Because I am a coloured male who happens to be a former learner at the secondary school, the participants seemed more relaxed around me. This was largely to the similar background that I shared with them. My experience was different at the skills school although I could relate to all the learners by virtue of being male. In some cases it was difficult to establish a relationship with the participants as they found my presence intimidating and the experience of the research process to be overwhelming. This became apparent to me when some other boys initially referred to me as “Sir.” Although I foresaw this relationship to some extent I tried to remedy it by dressing informally so that they would not see me as a figure of authority but as a student. I also told the boys to address me by my first name and prior to each focus group the participants and I took some time to get to know each other and engage with each other informally.

Although I obtained a certain amount of success at breaking down the power dynamic, some boys still seemed overwhelmed by my presence. I would say that some of the boys

placed me on equal footing with the teachers at the school, hence the usage of the term “Sir.” This made it increasingly difficult to obtain responses from some of the boys.

On the other hand, the majority of boys (especially the boys that attended the secondary school) considered me to be one of them. Since I attended the same school and grew up in a neighbourhood the majority of these boys could relate to, they were eager to discuss certain aspects of their life openly with me.

With each focus group I was always aware of my own experience and my own views of the research topic that I brought to the discussion. As a result, I tried not to be biased in my interviews this however, was unavoidable at times.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

Permission to conduct this study was requested from the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Stellenbosch, the Western Cape Education Department and the principals of the schools involved in the study. Once I had received permission from the respective bodies I approached adolescent boys between the ages of 14-16 at the respective schools. Those who were interested were given consent forms to give to their parents. Without their parents' consent boys were not allowed to participate in the study. Once the parent granted permission, boys were given an assent forms that they had to complete. In this form they were made aware of information that I had already relayed to them verbally. They were informed that the research was fully voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage of the research process. The focus groups were video recorded. The implications of video recording means that it cannot always ensure anonymity therefore video recordings of research participants and the schools will remain confidential. To ensure that the video recordings remained

confidential all recordings and transcriptions were stored electronically on a computer that is password protected.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter I provide an overview of the methodology used in this research. I gave an accurate account of each step in the research design and also provided reasons for the particular methods and techniques selected. In the following chapter I will present the findings, discussion and my interpretations of the discussion with the young men.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4. Introduction

In order to provide a rich account of the data the analysis and discussion sections are combined. This chapter highlights the broad constructions of masculinity in the participant's narratives that pertain to violence. It should be noted that discussion only focused around why young men constructed their masculine identity using acts of violence. Therefore in order to make sense of the data the discussion was divided in to 6 themes.

1. "Men have the guts to do something..."
2. "You need to prove to other men that you a man"
3. "Jou swag lift mos" (Your status increases)
4. "All that stress I bubble up in me"
5. "Daai is die gouste way om 'n problem optelos"
6. "He wanted to show he can protect her. He wanted to be the man."

Within each theme there are overarching themes and sub themes. Each theme has therefore been organised using the steps of thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Direct quotes from the transcribed data have therefore been presented in order to substantiate and represent the themes and general findings that emerged from the analysis of the data.

#### **4.1 “Men have the guts to do something...”**

Although several of the participants acknowledged that boys were reared to be tough there were some participants who considered violence and aggression to be characteristics all males are biologically predisposed to. Traces of this thought pattern was exposed in several of the participant’s narrative. When the researcher asked the participants why they thought men were more likely to be gangsters? P10 response was “cause most men probably have power.” Similarly P16 also claims that men are mostly gangsters “because they have more power”

Extract: 1

**Interviewer:** Can you explain what you mean by power?

**P10:** We talking about physically

**P14:** and mentally also

**P19:** more fighting skills

**P12:** “men have guts to do something and most women don’t have guts.”

From these aforementioned narratives, it is evident that some of the participants’ views corresponded with the traditional dominant ideals of masculinity. Traditional beliefs about masculinity hinge on the idea that men have different behaviours and different roles in society because they are biologically different from females. In these participants’ narratives men are considered to be physically and mentally more powerful than women. Furthermore men are also regarded as naturally possessing more fighting skills than women. In the specific case of a gangster, the participants assume that males are naturally better equipped to do the tasks associated with being a gangster because males possess the aforementioned characteristics. It

should be noted that according to the participants gangsters were usually people whom according to P20 “walked with weapons around”, according to P13 “always get into fights and according to P12 “they always want to do crime.”

From a social constructionist point of view males are not by nature physically and mentally more powerful than females. However, social constructionist would argue that the pervasiveness of male dominance in all social and public domains’ creates the impression that males are more powerful than females. Furthermore this impression is reinforced daily by men who take on dominant roles in social and public life.

In the specific case of gangsters for example, the participants assume that males are more likely to be gangsters because they are naturally more powerful than women. However, what the participants do not realise is that the actual reason as to why the participants think men are more likely to be gangsters does not stem from men’s physical and mental power but rather arises from the fact that these boys mainly see and know men and boys who are gangsters.

From the extract above it is also apparent that the participants hold onto cultural ideals of masculinity that is interwoven with power. It is also evident that for these participants power is closely associated with behaviours such as violence. As a result, because gangsterism is usually associated with behaviours like violence, gangster through their violent interaction in part, create and recreate the idea that masculinity is about power. By constantly reproducing the idea that masculinity is about power through fighting and other violent behaviour, violence is regarded as a natural behaviour.

Apart from possessing more power and fighting skills the enactment of violent behaviour was also regarded as normal for most men. In this context several of the boys



regarded the performance of violence among men as normal. This was evident in P11's response in the extract below.

Extract: 2

**P11:** It's normal, it's normal for most men to fight. Looking at wrestling for example they fight for no reason. It's almost like a challenge. I'm going to challenge you then you get paid or you get a reward.

In this extract P11 highlights that violent behaviour is normal for most men. By using the word "normal" P11 creates the impression that it is typical of most men to behave aggressively. Although violent behaviour may be typical of men, P11 also acknowledges that not all men are violent. By using the phrase "most men" he creates the impression that violence is normal because the majority of men enact violence however, he also creates the impression that there are a few men who are not violent. In this extract P11 highlights that the majority of men regard violence as normal because society has socialised them into thinking that violent behaviour is a normal male behaviour but at the same time he also highlights the idea multiple masculinities exist.

From a social constructionist point of view it can be argued that the enactment of violence among men is something that is so common among males that it has become institutionalised in society. Social constructionist would argue that if "it is normal for most men to fight" then violence becomes a routine part of most male's lives. The more males enact violence in society the more people come to regard male violence as a typical behavioural trait for men and boys. Furthermore media images of men fighting such as shows like wrestling only perpetuates the idea that violence is a typical behaviour for males. The willingness to enact violence among males is therefore not attributed to the idea that males are

biologically predisposed to violent behaviour but that male violence is so common that it is acceptable and even normal for males to enact violence.

#### 4.2 “You need to prove to other men that you a man”

An apparent motivation for the enactment of violence by men and boys that emerged in the participants’ narratives was that the enactment of violence is a means by which boys and men construct their masculinity. From some of the participant narratives it is clear that some of the participants’ ideas of what it means to be a man were strongly associated with violence. The enactment of violence in many respects served as a demonstration by which young men attempted to prove to other men and to themselves that they are indeed men. In the extract below P6 highlights how fighting is a way of showing his opponent “who the man is”.

Extract: 3

**P6:** Dis amper soos jou pa slaan jou met die belt net om te wys wie die man is in die huis. Nou as jy in a n nuwe community in kom en hie will’n bra vir jou net kom ruk en plik van ‘n kant af, jy gaan hom mos slaan, net om te wys maar vir my word nie soe rond geshove nie.

**Translation P6:** It is almost as if your father hits you with the belt just to show you who the man of the house is. Now if you come into a new community and here is this guy that just starts to bully you, you are obviously going to hit him just to show that you can’t be shoved around.

According to Kaufmann (1999) masculinity is about power and the enactment of violence by men in order to dominate another person is thus a representation of that power.

From extract 3 we can discern from P6's narrative that the enactment violence is a representation of male power. In this extract P6 highlights that violence is a means by which boys and men are able to show other men and boys who the man is. P3 makes reference to the enactment of violence by men and boys by comparing it to a beating a boy would receive from his father if he were disobedient. Like the father, who is just trying to show his son who the man of the house is, P6 claims that violence in the street against other males is based on the same principles, it is about showing your opponent "who the man is." Furthermore what was also evident from the participant narratives was that men, in this case young men, who were incapable of demonstrating their masculinity by enacting violence were not considered to be men by their peers. Young men who were incapable of enacting violence when it was deemed necessary to, were likely to be disrespected by their peers. The latter was highlighted in extract 4 by P8 and P5.

Extract: 4

**P8:** You need to show that you a man, you need to prove to other men that you a man uhm cause if they don't take you as a man they won't treat you like one they will look at you as something less than a man.

**P5:** They won't have respect for you.

Peers groups place an immense amount of pressure on the adolescent to act a certain way in order to fit in. In peers groups dominated by young men, young men had to ensure that they fit in with their peer group. In most cases, the most common form of behaviour to ensure that an adolescent boy was part of the group was violence.

Kimmel (1994) states that adolescent boys soon learn that their peers are sort of gender police constantly threatening to unmask them as feminine. As a result, adolescent boys are

often motivated to demonstrate their masculinity by enacting violence. They do this in order to gain approval from their peers or risk being disrespected by their peers. Interestingly enough several of the participant narratives corresponded with Kimmel's theory. Extract 5 highlights this phenomenon below.

Extract: 5

**P7:** Sometime you want to impress your friends; you want to show them you can't come hit me. You know if he comes and smack me and you leave it like that your friends will say you weak and stuff.

**P6:** Chicken!

**P5:** Yor jy is n bunny! Jy los dit net soe!

**Translation P5:** You are a coward! You are leaving is just like that.

**Interviewer:** What is a bunny?

**P5:** Like you weak man, you can stand up for yourself.

**P6:** Jy is n moffie!

**P5:** Ja! Something like that.

**Interviewer:** What is a moffie?

**P9:** He is a woman in a man's body.

**P7:** He acts like a girl.

**P8:** He is more feminine

It should be noted that the use of the words, “chicken and bunny” indicate that boys who choose not to engage in fights are considered to be weak. The terms “chicken” and “bunny” are derogatory terms for cowardly and homosexual. The term “moffie” in this context refers to homosexual men and these men are regarded as weak men because they possess feminine tendencies. By labelling boys who refuse to fight as cowards and homosexuals their peers attempt to take away their manhood. It is clear from these narratives that adolescent boys are expected to negate any behaviour deemed to be feminine or which contravenes the traditional dominant ideal of masculinity.

Kimmel (1994) argues that masculinity is socially constructed entity where men attempt to gain approval through performing in a certain way that society considers to be masculine. In extract 5 it is evident that boys carry an immense amount of pressure from their peers to act in accordance to the societal norms of manhood. Any other behaviour that contrasts the cultural ideals of what it means to be a man is considered feminine and inappropriate for men to display. In this case violence is key marker of manhood and as a result, boys who refuse to enact violence in situations where it is deemed necessary suffer constant rejection from their peers. The fear of constantly being ridiculed shamed, and put down by their peers constantly mould the participants understanding of masculinity. From the extracts highlighted in this theme it was evident that the participants were pressured into endorsing traditional hegemonic norms of masculinity.

#### **4.3 “Jou swag lift mos” (Your status increases)**

Strongly associated to the previous theme is the idea that a man’s status increases with his ability to enact violence. According to Seedat et al. (2009) many dominant ideals of masculinity encourage men to be highly competitive about gaining respect, power, and status.

In the specific case of this study, a man's ability to demonstrate his masculinity using violence in order to be respected and achieve status as a man was considered to be a key motivation for men and boys enactment of violence.

Extract: 6

**P5:** To earn respect also say ma now I fight with someone in matric and I “verdala” him (beat him up) then the people that's also in matric would be like a bit more scared to fight against you then to fight against anyone else that's is like their size.

As discovered in the previous theme, boys often engaged in fights to prove their manhood. While the ability to enact violence was generally regarded as a marker of manhood one's ability to win fights further solidified one's status as a man. In the narrative above P5 explains that if he were to fight someone in school who is older and possibly bigger than him and dominate this person, he would generally be respected by his peers and the peers of his opponent. Furthermore he adds that his peers and also the peers of his opponent would be afraid of fighting him in future because he beat someone who everyone thought was supposed to dominate him.

According to some of the participants' boys and young men who were regarded as winners of their fights were admired, held in high esteem by their peers, and afforded certain privileges. The ability to win a fight also served as a boost to the male ego. This was made evident by P9 in his response below.

Extract: 7

**P9:** It's like big! You the man now causes you hit this guy. Other girls you don't even know they start waving, here is my contact boytjie run away again. You get girls like that.

In this extract P9 highlights the feelings he feels once he wins a fight, he claims that his male ego is boosted and that everyone considers him to be the man. He P9 also generally feels like the man to. To be the man means that one needs to succeed at a range of behaviours that are generally associated with the dominant ideals of masculinity.

P9 also has the perception that once he wins a fight that girls start to notice him and he is subjected to preferential treatment by some of the girls. This finding corresponds with the findings of Reilly, Muldoon and Byrne (2004) in their research conducted in Northern Ireland. Some of the young men in their study revealed that young women respected violence and found it to be sexually attractive.

To further elaborate the idea that violence increases a man's status P9 provides a personal account in which he fought a friend because he disrespected his friend. The extract below highlights how initially P9 accepted his beating because he P9 deemed what he had done to be wrong. Violence against P9 was therefore justified.

Extract: 8

**P9:** I had a fight against my friend over his girlfriend. One day after school I went to the toilet so his girlfriends walked past so I made a mistake, I pulled her in and got busy. I went home so my other friend came to tell me this guy he says he is going to hit you but we all friends. One of the friends wants to hit me now cause of his girlfriend.

So went to school the next day and he is waiting there in front of the gate the whole school is against the fence like there is going to be a boxing match now they all waiting so I knew already. I climb out of the taxi I check I am not going to hit this man cause I did something wrong. Ok so he hit me, he smack me, smack me bhaaaa knock my head against the cars bonnet. So he left and all my friends followed him but there was no one to like ask me if im ok or something all my friends followed him. So I check he took it over board so I went back for him so I hit him.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think your friends followed him?

**P9:** Cause he won the fight. I didn't hit him back.

**Interviewer:** So how did that make you feel at the time when you saw all your friends follow him?

**P9:** It's like you failed a mission.

**P8:** They didn't want to be seen with the weak one that lost the fight. So they all went to the strong one.

**P8:** They have no respect for you, then you have to fight to get that respect back again because otherwise people just look at you as the weak one who lost the fight.

**P9:** So I went for him again and then people started shouting (shouting in support of the fight).



Although P9 initially justified the beating that he got from his friend, he soon realised that once the rest of his friends had left him and followed his friend who at that point was considered the winner of the fight that he needed to fight back. In the eyes of his peers at that point in time he was deemed weak. In order to not appear weak P9 attempted to gain the respect of his friends by fighting back. By fighting back P9 attempted to salvage his masculinity and earn his peers respect as a man (Kaufmann, 1999). According to Seedat et al. (2009) South African men tend to be highly competitive about power, respect, and status (Seedat et al., 2009). Demonstrations of toughness, bravery, and defense of honor therefore readily translate into high risk behavior (Seedat et al., 2009).

#### **4.4 “All that stress I bubble up in me”**

Many of the dominant forms of masculinity hinge on the internalisation of a range of emotions (Kaufman, 1999). For men and boys who endorse the dominant traditional forms of masculinity there are a range of emotions that are considered inappropriate when dealing with pain or hurt (Kaufmann, 1999). Furthermore it is also generally expected of women to be expressive about their emotions. Since traditional masculinity supports the idea that men and women are inherently different. Men and boys who endorse the traditional ideals of masculinity are likely to suppress their emotions in order not to come across as being feminine. The result however, is that men and boys tend to redirect their emotions into anger and rage (Kaufmann, 1999). The suppression of emotions was a key motivation behind men's enactment of violence for the participants.

Extract: 9

**P19:** “Men stress a bit more. Ok maybe I'm like angry all that stress I bubble up in me, so then I hit it out on a person and that's stress.”

To further demonstrate this point P23 provides a personal account in which he expresses how he continually suppressed his emotions to the point that he was filled with unresolved emotions. The inability to talk to someone or in the case of P23 not having anyone to talk to about his emotions resulted in the severe beating of a boy who irritated him on a particular day. This was elaborated in the extract below.

Extract: 10

**P23:** Ek het baklei hy het my baie kwaad gemaak. Ek het vir hom drie keur gese moet nie my ma uit vloek nie. Hy het die derde keur weer my ma uit gevloek toe se iets in my kop jy gaan die laaitjie seer slaan en toe slaan ek hom.

**Translation P23:** I fought, he made me very angry. I told him three times don't you curse my mother. When he cursed at me the third time something told me I'm going to hurt this kid, and so I hit him.

**P23:** No because all the anger van all die maande ek soe opstoor wat mense my soe kwaad gemaak het ek hou dit in. Ek het nooit iemand gehad om saam met te praat nie, nooit iemand gehet om saam te praat nie. Toe kom dit net soe dat hy my ma vloek en toe gee ek hom n stukkies van daai vuur wat ek gehet het in my hart all dai anger wat ek gehad het het ek afgestoer op hom. I rearranged his face with my anger.

**Translation P23:** No because of all the anger of all the months' that I stored up inside because of people that made me angry. I kept it in. I never had someone to talk to. I never had anyone to talk to.

So it came about that this kid swore my mother and then I gave him  
a piece of my fist because of all the anger I had stored up inside my  
heart. I rearranged his face with my anger.

In P23 narrative he describes how by suppressing his emotions he had all this pent up frustration within him. As a result, the only way he was able deal with his years of pent up frustration was to enact violence on another boy. While P23 actions correspond with the ideals of the traditional dominant hegemonic masculinity, he P23 also deviates from traditional ideal of masculinity by implying that if he had someone to talk to, he would not have all this pent up frustration within him. Interestingly enough by stating that if he had someone to talk to P23 makes reference to alternative forms of masculinity. Alternatives forms of masculinity contradict the ideals of the traditional dominant hegemonic masculinity. It is evident from this description that society constructs masculinity in multiple ways. As result, boys hold multiple and conflicting positions of masculinity. This multiple and conflicting nature of masculinity attests to the socially constructed nature of masculinity as a diverse and fluid construct.

Since many men and boys suppress their emotions the use of violence was often a compensatory mechanism for many males especially when men and boys felt a sense of powerlessness. For young men who experience feelings of powerlessness violence is used as a compensatory mechanism especially against people that deemed weaker than them. By enacting violence on someone deemed weaker young men are able to reinforce their identity as men which are strongly linked to having power.

Kaufmann (1999) argues that if the dominant traditional ideals of masculinity are all about power and control then not having power only heightens the masculine insecurities of young men. If young men are insecure about their manhood violence is one of the main

behaviours by which men and boys are able to prove their manhood. However, in the case in which they experience powerlessness the enactment of violence is usually on someone considered weaker. This is a way by which men and boys who experience feelings of powerlessness are able to prove to themselves that they are indeed men. An indication of this phenomenon is presented in the extract 11 below.

Extract: 11

**P3:** You also get that boys that take it all in then afterwards they just take it. Hulle vat dit uit op iemand anders miskien jy slaan nou vir my en ek vat alles in en jy is ouer as my en ek vat dit so ek kan nie vir jou slaan nie ek vat alles net in en ek bou en dit werk net op in my dan sal ek eerder my frustrasies op iemand anders uit haal. Of jy kry van dai laatjies wat hulle kan dit nie meer vat nie die enigste way uit is vir hulle om suicide to commit of soe.

**Translation P3:** You also get those boys that take it all in. Then afterwards they just take it, they take it out on someone else. Maybe like you hit me, I take it all in cause you are older than me. Then I will either take my frustrations out on someone else or you get those boys that can't take it anymore so the only way out for them is to commit suicide.

This extract highlights how violence becomes a compensatory mechanism for boys who internalise feelings of rejection, pain, and belittlement. P3 highlights how boys who experiences feelings of not having power internalise the emotions and redirect their emotions to someone they regard as less powerful than they are. For Kaufmann (1999) violence on someone physically weaker re-establishes young men's self-worth as a man. By enacting

violence on someone weaker the individual gets to reaffirm his sense of manhood. Choosing someone weaker almost guarantees dominance and thus guarantees self-worth. Alternatively young men who are overwhelmed by feelings of powerlessness are also likely to inflict violence on themselves by committing suicide.

From a social constructionist point of view, men learn from an early age that it is inappropriate to show emotion (Kaufmann, 1999). Many men believe that by publicly displaying certain emotions for example crying or vulnerability will result in them being perceived as weak and inadequate. Subsequently men affirm their masculine identity by avoiding intimacy or seeking help from others. This is central to why men and boys keep their feelings intimate and to themselves and are more likely to display typical masculine emotions such as aggression as was highlighted by P3 in extract 11.

Furthermore the fact that boys experience powerlessness also attests to the diverse nature of masculinity. If traditional dominant ideals of masculinity hinge on the idea that masculinity is a fixed entity characterised by power then boys who experience powerless create the impression that masculinities are diverse because not all men and boys have equal levels of power.

#### **4.5 “Daai is die gouste way om ’n problem optelos”**

For several of the participants the enactment of violence and aggression is regarded as a suitable means of problem solving. The fact that violence was considered to be a quick and effective means of problem solving was one of the primary motivations behind why men and boys enacted violence.

Extract: 12

**P10:** Yes if we look at our current community if uhm maybe this small boy gets beaten up by another boy bigger than him then the boy usually go to the father. Then the father or the brother then they would like to go to this boy and confront this boy or beat up this boy. So usually I would say that the father or the brother it's usually the male specie that wants to go and confront the next person.

Extract: 13

**P 12:** Like from a man's point of view say now im a father and a boy that's five years older than my son who is now 10 hits my son like literally beat him with his fists. I would not like go to him to go talk to him and tell him he mustn't do that. I will go hit him because I would have seen what he done to my son cause talking to him wont necessary help next time he is going to feel like I got away with it "they just talk to me" they didn't do anything.

For the majority of boys in the study, the option of communicating their grievances with the other person was considered inappropriate and ineffective. Reacting aggressively to a conflict situation ensured that the problem would not persist in future. In contrast, talking about the problem would make a man look as talking about a problem is generally considered to be a feminine trait. If a man had to talk about his problem, then people will come regard him as a pushover. Furthermore the idea that talking is regarded as a feminine trait is made clear by P10 in the extract below.

Extract: 14

**P10:** I think women are more considerate they thinking of the consequences that might follow after so that's why they would discuss it calmly. Where men sometimes just think he did something I must get him back, I must show my child that I am there I can protect him.

Generally it was regarded that women were much more understanding when it came to dealing with a problem. Women were more likely to take a step back and think things through before engaging a problem. As a result, women were more likely to discuss their problem as opposed to engaging violently in a situation. While women were viewed as considerate with the ability to think things through, men on the hand are considered to be different. These differences correspond with the traditional ideologies about gender that masculinity and femininity are inherently different constructs.

Once again this theme highlights the socially constructed nature of gender. Society constructs men and women differently. For example this theme highlights how men and women go about dealing with conflict situations differently. Generally it is expected of women to talk things through, while it is expected of men to deal with an issue in an aggressive manner. By enacting these different behaviours, men and women constantly created and recreate these gender stereotypes. Cultural ideas of what it means to be man is therefore becomes closely interwoven with aggression and cultural ideals of what it means to be a women is closely linked with talking and dealing with problems in a considerate manner. The more men in the communities that these participants find themselves in deal with problem in an aggressive manner, the more violence becomes an acceptable way of dealing with problems for men. It is thus clear that in this theme that some of the participants

construct their masculinity according to the cultural ideal of the traditional dominant form of masculinity.

#### **4.6 “He wanted to show he can protect her. He wanted to be the man.”**

Although not stipulated, it was evident that the majority of boys held traditional ideals of masculinity that regard men as the protector of women. For the participants protecting women especially the women or females in their lives meant that sometimes one had to engage in physical violence. This was apparent in extract 15 below.

Extract: 15

**P20:** There was this boy this was like after school me and my girl was walking down the stairs they threw like a ball, a soccer ball in her face so I threw him back so we started to fight.

This extract highlights how P20 felt the need to prove his masculinity by protecting his girlfriend. In this extract P20 engages in a fight with a boy who threw a ball in the face of his girlfriend. What is most notable about this extract is that P20 felt it was his duty to protect his girlfriend. What also emerged in this extract is that by standing up for his girlfriend P20 unconsciously assumes that his girlfriend is incapable of standing up for herself, mainly because he regards her as physically weaker. Numerous other boys shared the belief that a boys role was to protect his girlfriend.

Extract: 16

**P12:** She will say nothing; she will just be like cry or something if the ball hit her hard. You will automatically want to do something.



**P13:** Cause you feel like you have the responsibility to protect her.

Extract: 17

**Interviewer:** Where does this responsibility come from?

**P13:** When you commit to a relationship, then you now feel, it's not a need to do so, but you yourself feel that you must protect her especially when a guy like he said (referring to P20) is older or it's a boy that hits a girl.

**P13:** Ja! Looking at the situation the girl won't be able to like get this boy back so you as a boy must step in and show him that he should respect the girl.

Extract 17 illustrates that boys are socialised into thinking that they have a responsibility to protect their girlfriends. It is clear from this extract that within a relationship setting it is generally the boys' responsibility to protect his girlfriend. Boys adopt this role as the protector because they are usually confronted with images of men being the leader and the protector on a daily basis. Due to all the traditional images of hegemonic masculinity that boys are confronted with on a daily basis, boys suffer from immense internal pressure to conform to the traditional hegemonic ideal of masculinity.

In addition by standing up for his girlfriend P20 (in extract 15) is and was able to show his girlfriend that he is capable of protecting her that he is a man. However, by not protecting her he is more likely to not be considered a man. It is therefore evident, that the participants' ideals of what it means to be a man is strongly associated with the protection of women. The enactment violence is often a means by which men and boys are able to protect their women.

Furthermore it is also clear that society places immense pressure on boys to conform to traditional dominant stereotypes of masculinity. When asked what he thought his girlfriend would do if he did not stand up for her? P13 responded that he thought that his girlfriend would probably “break up” with him largely cause she feels it his duty as a man to stand up for her. Even though times have changed and there are different forms of masculinity the dominant ideals of masculinity still continue to shape young men’s masculinity. It is clear, from this situation that young men continue to experience external pressure to conform to the traditional dominant forms of hegemonic masculinity.

Furthermore even though P13 admits that it is not necessary to defend your girlfriend he still feels the need to stand up for her. This indicates how society places an immense amount of pressure on men to conform to the traditional ideals of masculinity.

What was also notable was that according to P12 in extract 16 that boys would “automatically” want to defend their girlfriend. The use of the word “automatically” highlights the perception that the need to protect their women was something that men and boys have no control over. From P12 one gets the impression that he regards men to naturally stronger than women as a result, he has the automatic response to protect her. What is also notable from this response is the internal pressure and external pressure in order to conform to this traditional dominant ideal of masculinity. Furthermore the majority of boys considered men who hit women to be “moffies.” It should be noted that the term “moffie” had a dual meaning. As mentioned before in a previous theme the central definition of a “moffie” was that a moffie is a guy who looks like a man but acts feminine. However, in the case above where a guy hits a girl a “moffie” was described as a “women abuser” by P6. Violence against women was therefore considered abuse because women were generally considered weaker than men.

For many of the participants violence against women was unacceptable, men who enact violence against women are regarded as weak and as a result, are not considered men. Interestingly enough this contrasted with the previous themes in which boys and men were idealised for the violent behaviour especially when it had been enacted against men. In this theme however, the enactment of violence was not a means by which men could construct their manhood but it was a means by which men could deconstruct their manhood.

In contrast though, one boy acknowledged that in some cases violence against women could not be considered abuse. He states that in some cultures violence against women are legitimate. The extract below provides a clear description of P7 exact words.

Extract: 18

**P7:** It not always when you hit a girl that you are a moffie  
sometime you want to show her who the man of the house she can't  
just disrespect you so you teach her a lesson.

In this extract participant 7 highlight that as the man of the house he was entitled to hit his wife or girlfriend if she disobeyed his authority as a man. In this case violence was legitimated. For some men is a means of teaching women a lesson to ensure that she would not be disobedient and disrespectful again. As result, the enactment of violence against women is a way to maintain and to manufacture the gender hierarchy between men and women. It is used as a means of asserting power, control and domination over women.

#### **4.7 Overview of the findings**

This research validated every other study that set out to examine why young men and boys are the predominantly perpetrators of violence. Like majority of the research already

conducted this research found that the majority of boys who enact violence conform to traditional norms of masculinity. As a result, it would seem as though conforming to traditional norms of masculinity are the underlying causes behind why young men are so violent. An overview of the central issues is presented below.

### **“Men have the guts to do something...”**

While attempting to explore the relationship between boys and violence the participants in this study created the impression that masculinity is a fixed construct that only certain boys and men could attain. This was particularly apparent when the boys were asked the question why they thought men were mostly gangsters? Generally it was assumed that men were more likely to be gangsters because they are physically and mentally more powerful than girls and women. Men were also considered to possess more fighting skills and in addition, men had the guts to do things and most women did not have the guts to things. These participants created the impression that men had the innate ability to be gangsters.

Furthermore violence was also deemed to be normal for most men. According to P11 “Its normal for most men to fight” however, despite violence being normal for most men to fight P11 uses the term “most” by using this word he creates the impression that not all men are violent. Although violence is normal for men there are men who do not enact violence there are men that differ from the traditional hegemonic violent man.

### **“You need to prove to other men that you a man”**

This theme highlights how young men are faced with internal and external pressure to constantly prove their masculinity to their peers. These pressures were usually a primary

motivator behind young men's ability to enact violence. Throughout the narratives it was clear that for adolescent boys violence is a means of proving to their peers that they are men. Since traditional ideals of masculinity encourage the use of violence, violence was used as a demonstration for adolescent men and boys to show that they are indeed men.

Boys who were incapable of demonstrating their masculinity by enacting violence was often ridiculed and called names such "chicken, bunny and moffie" Boys are therefore under constant pressure to display their masculinity.

**"Jou swag lift mos" (Your status increases).**

While the tendency to enact violence was often regarded as demonstration of one's manhood for some of the participants' violence was often regarded as means of increasing ones status as a man. In the participant narratives, several stories highlighted that winning fights was a boost for the male ego. Winning a fight made them feel like men. To be the man meant that, one was powerful, one could fight, one was good at fighting and that one was respected for ones fighting ability. Furthermore boys also had the perceptions that girls showed interest in boys who won fights.

**"All that stress I bubble up in me"**

An interesting motive behind men's enactment of violence was linked to the traditional ideologies of masculinity that discourages the expression of emotions for males. In this theme participants made reference to situations in which men suppressed their emotions and redirected it through anger and violence. Furthermore some boys also acknowledged that boys who lacked power often internalise feelings of powerlessness. Power is a defining feature of

traditional hegemonic masculinity. Therefore in order to feel powerful and also to make themselves feel like men, men and boys usually enact violence on smaller or weaker victims. In cases such as these, violence became a compensatory mechanism for boys who lacked power. However, not all boys use violence as a compensatory mechanism P3 also expressed that there are times when boys feel completely powerless by their inability to make the traditional masculine grade and as a result, they inflict violence on themselves by committing suicide.

**“Dai is die gouste way om n problem optelos” (Violence is quickest way to solve a problem)**

For some respondents violence was considered the quickest way of solving problems for men. If issues of conflict arose with another male, a male was likely to use violence to resolve the problem.

Although the participants acknowledged that talking was also a way and means of resolving a problem, it was generally seen as a feminine trait and was largely ineffective for men. If a male has a problem with another male and they tried to resolve it by talking he would be regarded as a pushover. Furthermore for the participant enacting violence also ensures that the problem would be dealt with once and for all.

**“He wanted to show he can protect her. He wanted to be the man.”**

In this theme many of the participants believed that they had the responsibility to protect their girlfriends. This responsibility to protect the women in their lives is strongly linked to traditional ideals of masculinity that regard men as the protectors of their families and households. In most cases, protecting their women meant that men had to enact violence.

Violence was therefore enacted in order to prove to other men and to themselves that they are men who are capable of protecting their women

The majority of the participants also thought that men who hit women were “moffies.” On the one side a “moffie” is a man with feminine traits and on the other side a “moffie” is a term given to a man that hits a women. In this context a man who hits a women is regarded as a “moffie” since it is generally perceived that men are naturally stronger than women.

Contrastingly however, not all boys agreed that all men are “moffies” if they enacted violence on women. P7 highlight that sometimes when you hit women it is to put her in her place if she disrespects your authority as a man.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

This chapter set out to explore the motivations behind why adolescent boys/young men enact violent behaviour. I discovered that violence was an integral part of how young men construct their masculinity in the new South Africa. Since male violence is not a new phenomenon to South Africa it can be argued that traditional norms of masculinity that encourage men to be dominant, powerful and in control has been recreated in the new South Africa by young men.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The participants in the study provided rich narratives of hypothetical situations and personal experience in which young men are or were motivated to enact violence. Interestingly enough the underlying motive behind men's violence can be attributed to the fact that many men continue to endorse traditional cultural ideals of hegemonic masculinity that is closely affiliated with respect, status, domination, control, independence, and power. In all the themes traditional ideals of hegemonic masculinity seem to be the underlying driving force behind men's violence. The findings in this study correlated with many other studies conducted both locally and internationally that has attempted to explore how men and boys construct their masculinity. The majority of these studies indicate that men who construct traditional ideals hegemonic masculinity are more prone to violence.

This chapter highlights the limitation and the implications of the research findings in this study. It also highlights and provides recommendations for future research on the constructions of masculinity.

### **5.2 Limitations of the study**

One notable limitation of the study was that sometimes it was difficult to elicit responses of some boys. In each of the two focus groups and also in the group interview there were boys who were quieter than the rest. Although numerous attempts were made in order to get these boys to interact they remained reserved in their responses. Furthermore I felt at times that these boys were incapable of voicing their own opinion. Sometimes I felt that those boys merely supported the opinions of the more dominant boys in the discussions because



they were too afraid to voice the own opinion, in fear that it might be regarded as silly or ridiculous. This may have minimised the accuracy of the findings as seen in chapter 4.

Due to the video recordings and audio recording of both the focus groups and also the group interview it could be that some boys were self-aware that they would be viewed by the researcher on tape after the interview. This self-awareness poses a challenge as it prevents the participants from voicing their own opinions.

### **5.3 Recommendation for future research**

Violence in South Africa is widespread particularly among young men and since this study only consisted of 23 coloured and black adolescent boys between the ages of 14-16 these finding cannot be generalised on the whole population of adolescent boys in South Africa. It is therefore advised that a quantitative study on this topic is done, taking into account all race groups of South Africa so that a more accurate generalisation on the topic can be provided.

Furthermore because this study excluded white South African adolescent males it would be interesting to continue this type of research with white adolescent males. In particular it would be interesting if research be conducted with white Afrikaner males whose hegemonic status is not as visible as it used to be in the past. It would be interesting to investigate how these white masculinities negotiate their masculine identity in the context of a Post-Apartheid society.

## 5.4 Conclusion

Violence in South Africa is a serious social issue. Despite various researchers attempts to examine the causes of violence very few research projects have adopted a gendered approach in order to understand this phenomenon. Research has shown that young men in South Africa are disproportionately represented as perpetrators of violence. Recently studies have found that masculinity is important construct for understanding young men's violence. The aim of this study was therefore to examine what the motivations are behind why men, particularly young men, were more prone to committing violence. Overall the findings of this study correlated with many international and national studies on the subject of men and violence. Broadly speaking traditional ideals of hegemonic masculinity surfaced in all themes. What became apparent in each theme was that the driving force behind men's willingness to enact violence was and is strongly linked to the fact that many men continue to endorse traditional beliefs of masculinity that encourage the use of aggression. For men who embrace this type of masculinity violence is a defining feature of being a man. If men continue to hold themselves to these traditional ideals of masculinity, violence will continue to be a defining feature of what it means to be a man and young men will continue to practice violence. Men therefore need to be educated that there are other alternative non-violent masculinities that they can practice. It is therefore my wish that this research is able to provide some useful insight into the field of masculinity and violence so that interventions can be created aimed at reducing the levels of violence among men.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Focus Group Guide interview**

1. Describe the men in the video?
2. Which of the depictions of the men in the video would you like to be like?
3. Do you think it is acceptable for teenage boys to fight?
4. Have you ever been involved in a fight?
5. Who hit who first?
6. How bad were the injuries?
7. How did it start?
8. What kind of men do you find in your community? Describe

## Appendix B

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM



**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:** Exploring the constructions of a masculine identity among adolescent boys in the Western Cape

**RESEARCHERS NAME(S):** Angelo Jephtha

**ADDRESS:** MR. ANGELO JEPHTHA (Masters Student in Research psychology,  
Department of Psychology)

Contact number: 0789774875

Email: 14705001@sun.ac.za

Address: Private Bag X1  
Matieland  
Stellenbosch,  
7602  
South Africa

**CONTACT NUMBER:** 078 977 4875

## **What is RESEARCH?**

Research is something we do to find new knowledge about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about disease or illness. Research also helps us to find better ways of helping, or treating children who are sick.

## **What is this research project all about?**

My research is about teenage boys in the Western Cape and the idea surrounding this research is to find out what motivates some teenage boys to act aggressively towards other individuals. In other words what are some of the causes that lead teenage boys to behave violently?

## **Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?**

You have been invited because you are a teenage boy between the ages of 14-16 years of age.

## **Who is doing the research?**

My name is Angelo Jephtha and I am a Research psychology Masters student within the Department of psychology at the University of Stellenbosch. I am doing this research because various researchers have shown that boys have a tendency to behave more violently than say girls. I find this to be really interesting and would like to investigate what motivates most boys to behave violently.

## **What will happen to me in this study?**

You will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion for no longer than two hours. This focus group discussion will be videotaped as well audio taped as audio taped as a backup measure. All that is expected of you is to answer the questions truthfully and honestly.

### **Can anything bad happen to me?**

Nothing bad will happen to the participants as there are no risks involved in this study. This will be a general discussion between adolescent boys and the researcher. The idea of this discussion is to get the perspectives from teenage boys as to why they think some boys have the tendency to behave aggressive and violently. However, if there is anyone that should experience emotional distress I will refer them to counselling centre at the University of Stellenbosch.

### **Can anything good happen to me?**

There are no direct benefits to the boys who are willing to participate however; the adolescent boys who are willing to partake in this study will increase my knowledge about the research topic. Furthermore a potential benefit of this study to science is that it is one of the few studies focusing on masculinity as there is very little research that has been done in this field within a South African context. It will create a platform on which educational recommendations in the area of masculinity studies can be created.

### **Will anyone know I am in the study?**

All participants identities will be kept confidential, only the researcher, the researcher's thesis advisors and the parents will know about the identity of the participants. Furthermore any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with the participant with the consent of their parent as required by law.



**Who can I talk to about the study?**

MR. ANGELO JEPHTHA (Masters Student in Research psychology, Department of Psychology)

Contact number: 0789774875

Email:14705001@sun.ac.za

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MS.ANTHEA LESCH (Department of Psychology)

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MR. ZUHAYR KAFAAR (Department of Psychology)

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Stellenbosch,

7602

South Africa

**What if I do not want to do this?**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

☐ YES☐ NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

☐ YES☐ NO

Do you understand that you can pull out of the study at any time?

☐ YES☐ NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY  
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

### STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

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**TITLE:** Exploring the constructions of a masculine identity among adolescent boys in the Western Cape

#### Parents and Guardian

Your son has been asked to participate in a research study conducted by ANGELO JEPHTHA, BA HONS PSYCHOLOGY, from the DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY at Stellenbosch University. I am a student currently trying to fulfil the requirements of a MASTERS DEGREE IN RESEARCH PSYCHOLOGY. Your son was selected as a possible participant in this study because he is an adolescent male between the ages of 14-16.

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate what motivates adolescent boys to behave violently in the Western Cape.

#### 2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

- Participate in a focus group discussion that will be video and audio recorded for about two hours at most.
- Answer the questions truthfully and honestly.

### **3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no risks involved.

### **4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There are no benefits to the subjects. The potential benefit of this study to science is that it is one of the few studies focusing on masculinity as there is very little research done on this topic in South Africa. It will also create a platform on which educational recommendations in the area of masculinity studies can be created.

### **5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

The participants will not be paid in money however; they will receive refreshments and light snacks during the duration of the data collection process.

### **6. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the participants will remain confidential.

The coding procedures will involve noting interesting data and putting into and archive. Data will be transcribed verbatim that will be electronically put in a computer that is



password protected. The only individuals that will have access to the data are the researcher and his thesis advisors.

The information will be collected via video tapes and audiotapes as a backup measures this information will only be accessible to the research and researcher's thesis supervisor. These video and audio tapes will be destroyed once the study is complete.

## **7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether you want to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you can withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still be in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

## **8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact.

MR. ANGELO JEPHTHA (Masters Student in Research psychology, Department of Psychology)

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Stellenbosch,  
7602  
South Africa

## **9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and withdraw participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE**

The information above was described to [the subject/*the participant*] by [ *the investigator*] in (*English*) and [*the subject is/the participant is*] was satisfactorily translated to [*me*]. (*The participant/the subject*) was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to [*my*] satisfaction.

[*I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.*] I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Subject/Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to \_\_\_\_\_  
[*name of the subject/participant*] and/or [his/her] representative \_\_\_\_\_

[*name of the representative*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*English*].

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Signature of Investigator

---

Date

## **Appendix D**

### **Letter to department of Education**

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Angelo Jephtha and I am a Masters Research Psychology student at the University of Stellenbosch. I am writing to request permission to conduct research various schools within the Western Cape. My research focuses on the motivation for the enactment of violent hegemonic masculinities among adolescent males in the Western Cape

I would like to visit these schools and run atleast focus group which is approximately 1-2 hours long with boys between the ages 14-16 years. With the principals permission each boy will have to fill in an assent form and their parents need to fill in a consent form before there are to participate in the study. These forms will clearly stipulate nature the study. Once the forms have been completed and depending on how much boys are interested to participate in this study only 6-10 boys will selected. These boys will be contacted telephonically in order to maintain their identity.

The focus groups will be videotaped for analysis and as a backup measure audio recorded. I will be happy to share my findings with the schools through a written report, but obviously the actual data will be highly confidential to protect the participants and in order to adhere to the research ethics.

I hope you will be able to grant me permission to carry out this research project within the Western Cape.

Sincerely

Angelo Jephtha

## **Appendix E**

### **Letter to the school**

The Principal and Staff

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Angelo Jephtha and I am a Masters Research Psychology student. I am writing to request permission to conduct research at your school. My research focuses on regulatory conception of masculinity among adolescent boys.

I would like to visit your school and run a focus group which is approximately 1-2 hours long. I would also require of you to distribute assent forms and consent forms to each 14-16 year old boys at the school.

Each boy will be given an assent form. Those who are interested will have to provide assent as well as provide consent form their parents. These forms will clearly stipulate nature of the study. Once the forms have been completed and depending on how much boys are interested to participate in this study only 6-10 boys will be selected. These boys will be contacted telephonically in order to maintain their identity.

I would also require your assistance in the provision of a small room. The focus groups will be videotaped for analysis. I will be happy to share my findings with you through a written report. However, the actual data will be highly confidential to protect the participants and in order to adhere to the research ethics.

I hope you will be able to participate in this research project.

Sincerely

Angelo Jephtha